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Shinrin-Yoku

Edited By: Dr. Brannick Riggs

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Shinrin-Yoku Meaning and Background

Chapter 2: How to Forest Bathe

Chapter 3: How to Use Shinrin-Yoku Forest Bathing Blend

Chapter One

Shinrin-Yoku Meaning and Background

The term *shinrin-yoku*, which means forest bathing, was coined by the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries in 1982. It refers to the act of immersing oneself in the atmosphere of the forest, connecting with its essence.

This form of ecotherapy quickly gained popularity in Japan. Researchers began studying the physiological benefits of forest bathing in the 1990s, confirming what most humans intuitively know: spending time in nature is beneficial to your well-being.

In today's urbanized, indoor world, human connection with nature has grown distant. In 1800, only 3% of the population lived in an urban area. By 2050, it's projected that 66% of the global population will live in cities. Studies sponsored by the Environmental Protection Agency reveal Americans on average spend 93% of their time indoors.





While living conditions have drastically changed in 200 years, genes take far longer to adapt. Because you're living in more urban areas and your genes are adapted to living in nature, you're physiologically at odds with your environment. Sympathetic nervous systems are frequently overstimulated, and many people commonly deal with high stress levels.

The sympathetic nervous system controls your fight or flight response—an acute reaction to a stressor. For example, if you came across an angry bear while hiking, your system would receive a shot of adrenaline. Your pupils would dilate to allow for the maximum amount of light and information. Blood would be shunted from your digestive tract to your muscles to help you either run away from the threat or swing your fists to defend yourself. Your heart and respiratory rates would speed up to quickly move oxygen to your waiting muscles. Your muscles would twitch as they become primed for use. Your ability to clot blood would increase so you don't lose too much blood in case of injury. Parts of your conscious brain would shut down to allow your natural instincts to take over. You wouldn't be thinking about what you'll have for dinner when you're about to become dinner. You'd need to run or fight.

The modern problem is this response not only happens when you're physically in danger, but also when you feel emotionally in danger. The crowd on the commuter train, the car that cuts you off on the freeway, and the report needed in two days rather than two weeks are all "bears." Your body responds to these things just as it would a bear in the woods. Modern life is full of triggers for the sympathetic nervous system.

The other side of the systemic pendulum is the parasympathetic nervous system. This side regulates the body, which allows it to rest and digest. It restores the body to its natural calm state so it can repair itself. This is often called homeostasis. In this state, your pupils constrict, allowing you to focus on small tasks. Your conscious brain is dominant, letting you think through decisions rather than react. Your respiratory and heart rates are normal, which decreases the energy you use. Blood flows to all organs, including the GI tract, kidneys, liver, and muscles, which allows you to digest and eliminate waste. In this state, you feel energized and refreshed.



Recognizing the importance of nature, many of the world's largest cities incorporate parks, trees, and green spaces into their bustling streets. Research published in the *International Journal of Environmental Health Research* even demonstrates that spending time in urban parks positively impacts one's sense of well-being.

Beyond city parks, the stress-reducing practice of forest bathing has been evidenced to have profound effects on people's health. Research reveals even as little as 10 to 20 minutes spent outdoors each day can lead to increased happiness and well-being. Nature has the power to nourish your soul and enhance your overall quality of life.

“Mountains are not esteemed because they are high, but because they have trees.”

—Japanese proverb

Chapter Two

How to Forest Bathe

What is forest bathing? What does an experience look like? *Shinrin-yoku* is a simple activity. It consists of three parts once you've found a spot of nature to enjoy:

1

Disengage from your daily routine.

First, find some area of untouched nature to spend some time in.

You may find a favorite tree, stream, or waterfall. What's important is to find a place where you can immerse yourself and connect to nature. This place should be somewhere close enough to visit frequently. You may find a few places that'll work, and you can alternate frequenting those spaces to change things up.

When you're in this natural space, you should disengage from your daily routines. Your routines are often interrupted by emails, texts, phone calls, and the priorities of others that often trump your own. This is exactly why you need to take undisturbed time for yourself. If you do take a phone with you, silence your phone or turn it off entirely and try not to use your electronics during your forest bathing experience. Remember, you're trying to settle into nature.



2

Breathe deep and connect with nature through a series of quiet activities or invitations.

Next, connect to nature through quiet activities. Begin by taking a few slow, deep breaths and simply observing the wonder around you.



Try to see nature through the eyes of a child, where everything is an interesting, beautiful miracle. With this fresh perspective, you can see the amazing patterns in tree bark, observe the activity of ants on the ground, or hear water in a nearby stream.

You can engage all your senses in this part of forest bathing. Listen intently for various bird songs, the sounds of moving water, or the wind shuffling through the forest canopy. You can watch the treetops moving with the shifting breeze, insects going about their busy day, or

birds flying from tree to tree. You may feel the branches and leaves of the plants and smell the bark or flowers that surround you. Touching your natural environment can be a profound experience for you. You can stop to feel the dirt that plants are growing in. Experience the damp richness of the soil. Feel the coolness of the stream. You may want to take your shoes off and dip your feet into the fresh moving water. Touch a stone to your face or forehead and notice how it has a cooler temperature than the rest of your surroundings.

A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a bright yellow jacket, is standing in a forest. She is looking up and touching the trunk of a large tree with her right hand. The forest floor is covered with green and brown ferns. The background shows more trees and a soft, hazy light.

Henry David Thoreau once said,

"I frequently tramped eight or ten miles through the deepest snow to keep an appointment with a beech tree, or a yellow birch, or an old acquaintance among the pines."

Use your own intuition to find "your tree"—one that speaks to you or has features you relate to. It may be a young tree that's just starting its life. It may be an old, scarred, and twisted tree that's become strong through its years of difficult wind, storms, and snow. Once you've found your tree, sit with your back resting against its trunk, safely climb into its branches, or lay underneath, looking up into the pattern created by its leaves. Let the forest speak to you through your heart, mind, and all your senses.

Matsuo Basho said,

"Not knowing the name of the tree, I stood in the flood of its sweet scent."

A person is sitting in a forest, holding a small plant. The background is a dense forest with many trees and green foliage. The person's hands are visible, holding the plant gently. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

**You may contemplate a phrase
or poem like “Good Timber” by
Douglas Malloch:**

The tree that never had to fight
For sun and sky and air and light,
But stood out in the open plain
And always got its share of rain,
Never became a forest king
But lived and died a scrubby thing.

The man who never had to toil
To gain and farm his patch of soil,
Who never had to win his share
Of sun and sky and light and air,
Never became a manly man
But lived and died as he began.

Good timber does not grow with ease:
The stronger wind, the stronger trees;
The further sky, the greater length;
The more the storm, the more the strength.
By sun and cold, by rain and snow,
In trees and men good timbers grow.

Where thickest lies the forest growth,
We find the patriarchs of both.
And they hold counsel with the stars
Whose broken branches show the scars
Of many winds and much of strife.
This is the common law of life.

Remember, forest bathing isn't a hike. You aren't trying to get from point A to point B. During this time, you're participating in nature and its beauty. That being said, hiking can present wonderful opportunities for forest bathing experiences. You can always stop your hike to rest and appreciate what's around you before continuing.

3 Transfer back to your daily life.

Finally, you'll slowly transition back to life. You may be reluctant to leave the forest and get back to normal life, but the point of *shinrin-yoku* is to have that time with nature change you.

You can help facilitate that change by asking yourself questions. What will you bring back to the world from this experience? What has this time with nature taught you? How are you going to change? How can you be more like a tree, deeply rooted and firm, yet flexible to the winds around you? If you're with someone or in a group, you may want to share your experience in quiet conversation.





You may live in a climate that changes throughout the year. While summer is the season many people commonly associate with forests and being outdoors, each season presents wonderful opportunities to experience the cycles of nature more purposefully.

Fall can be a busy time for animals as they prepare for winter. The scent of the forest changes to an earthy, grounding smell. Leaves transition from a palette of greens to amazing shades of red, orange, yellow, plum, and brown. It's a great time for reflecting and welcoming change.

Walking through a forest in winter, you can see how the landscape has changed during the last

six months. There are animal tracks in the snow. The trees and bushes have lost their leaves, exposing their strong, resilient bark. Winter birds flying through the trees and bushes.

Spring is the time of new life. Walking in the forest during this season can remind you of how each year offers a new beginning. Flowers bloom and trees bud with regrowth. Many animals have young ones to feed and protect. The water in the stream is colder from melting snow and ice. Spring forest bathing is all about celebrating the sights, sounds, and smells of awakening.

A person with long brown hair, wearing a teal knit sweater, dark pants, and brown boots, is walking away from the camera on a dirt path in a forest. The path is covered with fallen brown leaves. To the left of the path is a mossy log or rock covered in fallen leaves. The background shows tall, thin trees with some autumn-colored leaves. A dark semi-transparent box containing text is on the left side of the image.

In Our National Parks, John Muir wrote,

"Walk away quietly in any direction and taste the freedom of the mountaineer. Camp out among the grasses and gentians of glacial meadows, in craggy garden nooks full of nature's darlings. Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves. As age comes on, one source of enjoyment after another is closed, but nature's sources never fail."

Chapter Three

How to Use *Shinrin-Yoku* Forest Bathing Blend

There are times when your schedule doesn't allow you to spend as much time in the forest as you'd like. Or you may not live close enough to a forest or wild area to visit often.

So researchers developed a study to determine if nature and its benefits could be brought indoors. By sampling forest air, researchers discovered the trees released chemicals (phytoncides) into the atmosphere. These chemicals mainly consisted of limonene, α - and β -Pinene, and linalool, among others. The researchers then had research participants sleep in a hotel room while diffusing essential oils containing these phytoncides. Participants were tested alongside those who'd participated in a forest bathing experience. Over the three days, the study participants experienced the same benefits as those who'd actually participated in *shinrin-yoku*!

dōTERRA has developed a blend of CPTG Certified Pure Tested Grade® essential oils that contain these same phytoncides found in forest air. Shinrin-Yoku Forest Bathing Blend brings the rejuvenating essence of lush forests right into your home. Crafted with utmost care, Shinrin-Yoku harmoniously blends distilled Lemon, Magnolia leaf, Patchouli, Siberian Fir, Cypress, Hinoki, Grapefruit, Lavandin, Cardamom, Geranium, and Lemon Petitgrain.

Shinrin-Yoku Forest Bathing Blend is available in a 15 mL bottle and a prediluted 10 mL roller bottle (Shinrin-Yoku Touch). Shinrin-Yoku can be used aromatically or topically. If you use it topically, dilute one drop of the essential oil blend in 10 drops of carrier oil or simply roll on Shinrin-Yoku Touch.



Primary Benefits:

- Contains terpene- and phytoncide-rich essential oils, which replicate the positive effects of outdoor exploration.
- Creates a calming, grounding environment with a refreshing and inspiring aroma.
- Contributes to an energizing, rejuvenating experience.
- Is inspired by health-promoting forest bathing.

Uses:

- Diffuse to freshen the air.
- Inhale when meditating or journaling.
- Combine with a carrier oil for a personal aroma.



Bring the aroma of Shinrin-Yoku into your living space to create a sanctuary of calmness and tranquility. Let stress and tension melt away as you transform your space into a peaceful oasis, immersing yourself in the serenity of nature.

A person with long, wavy brown hair is seen from behind, looking out over a calm body of water. The water reflects the surrounding dense green forest. The scene is peaceful and contemplative.

“Trees are poems that
earth writes upon the sky.”
—Kahill Gibran